[W. G. Leonard]

Spokane, Washington

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JAN [?] [1939?] Personal Narrative - W. G. Leonard.

A personal narrative by W. G. Leonard, Carlyle Hotel, Spokane, based on his experience and that of his father the late Frederick Charles Leonard (1853-1932) in the timber business. As told to Glenn H. Lathrop

Mr. F. C. Leonard began as a common woodsman at Saginaw, Michigan shortly after the Civil war. Working and living conditions, as compared to later, were very primitive. The men were quartered in rough log houses with no glass in the windows, and no stoves - just a chimneyless open fire hole, the smoke from which escaped as best it could. The staple diet consisted of beans, tea, salt pork, and flour for baking; no sugar or potatoes. For beds, hay was strewn on the floor, and enough blankets were sewed together to make a single field blanket large enough to cover the men lying on their sides tightly packed. If one man was lousy (and at least one always was) they all became lousy.

Top wages were $30.00 per month. The hours were long, everyone turned out at 4 a. m., and the teamsters in particular often did not get back to camp until 9 or 10 p.m.

Single bit axes were standard equipment in Michigan.

In 1874, Mr. Leonard went to Eau Claire, Wisconsin to run camp for the Eau Claire Lumber Company, an early Weyerhaueser Company. At this time, although logging had commenced about 1850 in Wisconsin, the territory adjacent to the Chippewa River was virgin timber, a dense mass of trees with heavy underbrush. Mr. Leonard often remarked

that when they started logging operations here he wondered if he would live to see the day it would be logged more than two or three miles back from the river, for at this time the supply of timber seemed inexhaustable.

Wisconsin white (or cork) pine was the timber to be logged. This white pine differed greatly from western white pine. For example, a thousand board foot of lumber made from Wisconsin white pine, weighed about 1900 pounds; Western white pine lumber about 2300 per [?].

The land, timber and all, was purchased from the government. Top prices in the early days were 50 to 60¢ per [M?], for stumpage based on the buyer's own estimates.

For a distance of about one-quarter of a mile back from the streams, the logs were brought out by “go-deviling”, (skidding with oxen). For greater distances in from the streams, logging roads were made by clearing, brushing and grading; swamps were corduroyed. Skid roads branched off the main logging road. The logs were skidded to the main road and there decked to await freeze-up. About Christmas, after the roads were plowed of snow, they were rutted by plows and sleds with blades attached to their runners. These were followed by sprinklers, 60 bbl. tanks mounted on sleighs with sprinkler attachments to ice the ruts. At this point it is interesting to note that Mr. Leonard was the first man to use double-runner sprinklers. He was also the first to use horses for skidding. He remarked in later years that if he had it to do over again[.?] he would have 2 continued with oxen for the reason that their first cost was cheaper - at that time $100.00 per yoke, and they were far less susceptible to injury, but if injured could be fattened for meat, and in the last analysis they skid nearly as many logs as horses.

When the logging roads were sufficiently rutted and iced, the logs were loaded on sleighs and taken to the river or lake landings to be piled on rollways. Following the break-up of ice in the lakes and rivers, and when sufficient water was in the dams the “drive” would start.

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The camps and independent loggers inland along the tributaries of the main waterways would blast and “peavy” the logs from the rollways into the water and drive to the main lake or stream. Upon reaching Clam lake or the West Fork of the Chippewa River, all logs were turned over to the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Company's (original Weyerhaueser Company) “corporation drive”.

The corporative drive on the west fork covered about 160 miles from Clam Lake to Flambau farm. From this point many logs went an in rafts to LaCrosse, Wisconsin; Winona, Minnesota; Clinton and Dubuque, Iowa. At Clam Lake the “Wannigans” were constructed from lumber “whip-saved” from logs on the spot. Whip-sawing was a process in which logs were placed on a frame erected an sunken posts high enough to allow a man to saw from a standing position below; and sawed to desired specifications by hand. The “Wannigans” were the boats used to carry equipment. There was the “Cook-Wannigan” and the “Tent-Wannigan”, each about 18 feet wide by 60 feet long. The “Cook-Wannigan” was equipped with two large cooking ranges and portable tables and benches, as well as food supplies. Five meals a day were served; breakfast at 5 a. m., first lunch at 10 a. m., dinner at 12 noon, second lunch at 3 p. m. and dinner at 6 p. m. The “Tent-Wannigan” carried the tents, blankets, and personal effects of the men. Each “Wannigan” was handled by two men, one at a large sweep in front and the other at a similar sweep in the stern. Of necessity these men were very able rivermen. The “Wannigans” followed the drive to its destination and then, their usefulness over for that years were turned loose to drift down stream. Many of these corporation-drive “Wannigans” could be recognized on the Mississippi below St. Louis in use as house-boats enroute to New Orleans. When there was sufficient wind at Clam lake, the drive would get underway with the logs heading into the west fork of the Chippewa. At strategic points along the river, “boats” would be patrolled with several men to each beat. This to avoid jams. Logs halted by a rock or other obstruction in mid-stream were described as a “center jam”. Logs obstructed on either side of mid-stream were “wing-jams”.

A crew of about 180 men worked the rear of the drive. In the 19 years that Mr. Leonard managed the drive, 1883-1902, 10 of these years saw one billion feet of logs handled; while in one particular year the drive amounted to 1,250,000,000 feet.

It is interesting to note that at one time Mr. Leonard contracted to out timber and deliver logs a distance of some 13 miles, building his own “tote” roads and two large dams in the process, for a contract price of $3.35 per / M?

A sharp, but common practice of the time, among the smaller independent loggers, was to acquire 40 acres in the center of a large tract of heavy timbers and then to log it off in ever widening circles away beyond their own survey limits. This type of tract was called a “long-forty”. The logs out were the standard 16 feet. When the land was clear of pine they allowed it to go for taxes. 3 Living and working conditions in the woods of Wisconsin steadily improved until by 1895, although hours remained long and top wages had only increased to $50.00 and $60.00 per month, housing and food were vastly better. Mr. Leonard said that the food supplies purchased were of the highest quality and in great variety. In fact it was common practice to order a full mixed carload of choice hind quarters of beef, pork loins, hens, pork sausage and bacon at one time.

The lumberjacks, themselves, for the most part, were either Americans who had followed the timber from Maine to Pennsylvania and thence to Michigan and Wisconsin, or German or Scandinavian immigrants. Mr. Leonard, personally, considered the Swedes hardier than the Norwegians, but they were all strong, rough and ready specimans of manhood. They loved their work and took pride in excelling at each task assigned them. They were intensely loyal to their employers and seldom quit a job before that job was completed. In fact, a man who made a practice of quitting was soon blacklisted by both the lumberjacks and the employers.

As an example of their daring and hardihood, on one occasion two men working on the drive for Mr. Leonard as the result of a wager between themselves rode logs over a 60 foot

falls at what is now Cornell, Wisconsin, then Little Falls. One man was killed outright, but the other escaped with only a broken arm and bruises.

Most of the lumberjacks owned good “store-clothes” but, except an rare occasions, wore mackinaw pants, bright shirts, mackinaws and sashes. Wool socks were worn with rubbers in the woods. On the drive a special driving-shoe made by A. A. Cutter at Eau Claire, was most favored. Each spring, after a winter in the woods, about 5,000 of these men descended on Eau Claire for a riot of drinking, fighting, gambling and women. In the matter of only two or three days a winter's pay would be gone. From then until drive time the men would be “staked” by hotel and saloon keepers' for rooms, drinks, meals and tobacco.

After the drive was completed - usually early summer - another celebration was in order. Many of the men would go to Minnesota and the Dakotas for the harvest after which it would be time for another celebration; thence to the woods for fall and winter logging, and the cycle would be completed.

The lumberjacks, for all their hardiness, were rarely able to keep up the old pace of work and dissipation past the age of 50. Mr. Leonard's theory is that working in water did as much damage to their health as dissipation. During the early spring drive while working in ice-cold water they seemed to experience few ill effects, seldom had a cold or sore feet. But, when the water became warm colds, stiffness, and sore feet developed.

Veneral diseases, in many cases, took their toll also. In Eau Claire, 80 cases of syphilis were traced back to one French Canadian lumberjack. Gonorreah was very common. In fact many of the lumberjacks who would go South for the Louisianna hardwood logging in the winter held a belief that gonorreah was a good vaccination against yellow and malaria fevers and would deliberately become infected before going South.

Mr. Leonard quotes Frederick Weyerhaueser, the founder of the Weyerhaueser enterprizes, to the effect that he (Weyerhaueser) was a German immigrant carpenter who got his start in the lumber business by purchasing logs at Rock Island, Illinois which

had been hijacked and rebranded. Mr. Weyerhaueser could purchase these logs at a fraction of their real worth. He would take building 4 contracts and saw these logs to his own specifications. From this enterprise the Weyerhaueser interests grew until today they are perhaps the largest timber and lumber corporation in the world.

By 1910, the great stands of white pine in the Chippewa River territory was, with the exception of two tracts, virtually exhausted. In 1900, however, the Weyerhaueser interests sent Mr. Leonard into the northwest to inspect and pass on timber and mill sites. It was on Mr. Leonard's recommendation that timber was purchased and a mill put into operation at Bonners Ferry, Idaho - the first Weyerhaueser operation in the Pacific Northwest. Some Isolated Items of Interest

Mr. Leonard tells that, one time when the log drive was in progress on the west fork of the Chippewa river, his father had assigned him to help with the Wannigans. That particular evening, the cook wannigan tied up at what had once been an Indian battleground. Mr. Leonard went ashore to prepare a bean-hole (a hole in which a castiron beanpot is placed and covered with earth over which a big fire is built thus slowly cooking the beans). After digging down some eighteen inches, Mr. Leonard unearthed an iron tomahawk with the initials H.B. (Hudson Bay Co.), and with 20 or 25 notches filed on it. There vas never a Hudson Bay Post in that particular territory, so Mr. Leonard's theory is that it was brought in by the Sioux or possibly Northern tribes on one of their periodic war raids against the Chippewas. Mr. Leonard states that the Wisconsin Chippewas were a branch of the original Algonquin tribe that had migrated westward. They, as a type were only of medium height - 5' 8” to 5' 10”, but were very powerful, having broad shoulders and heavy muscular development. Mr. Leonard's opinion is, that for native intelligence, they were superior to the rank and file of white man. They were wonderful woodsmen and comparatively peaceful except for their perennial fued with the Sioux of the Minnesota prairies.

As a particularly good example of Chippewa pride and psychology, Mr. Leonard cites-the following:

Once a roadhouse was established along a road near to the operations of Mr. F. C. Leonard's crew and it was getting to be a nuisance as the men were purchasing liquor there. This was causing trouble in the camps as well as affecting the amount of work accomplished. Determined to be rid of this illegal nuisance, Mr. Leonard proposed to have someone whom he could trust purchase a bottle of whiskey with marked money and with the evidence thus obtained prosecute the operators of the roadhouse. Mr. Leonard selected for the job a trusted Indian who had been with him for years, Alec Whitefeather by name. When the proposed plan was explained to Whitefeather, he slowly shook his head and replied: “Mr, Leonard, I am sorry that I am not a white man so that I could do this thing you ask of me; but I am not a white man. I am an Indian and I just can't do such a thing as you ask.”

Mr. Leonard tells of a 5 franc gold piece found by Alec Bell, one of their camp watchers, who presented it to Mr. Leonard. Bell found it while spading garden at a camp on the east bank of lake Court Oreille, the site of one of Pierre Marquette's Missions. From the date on the coin it could have been lost by the Marquette expedition.

Read and approved by W. G. Leonard.

G. H. Lathrop 5 By 1904, the large seals timber operations in Wisconsin more rapidly [diminishing?] and the big operators were searching far [afield?] for new timber speculations.

The trend of migration was towards the Pacific Coast, but Dan McLeod of Eau Claire went southward to examine the timber possibilities in Florida. On the west coast of Florida, in the Swanee river country of Lafayette county, Mr. McCloud was offered 242 thousand acres of mixed timber which he promptly optioned at a price of $2.75 per acre

and returned to Eau Claire to interest others in the deal. Thus, eventually, the Putnam Lumber Company, now the outstanding firm in its particular field, was organized. Mr. P. C. Leonard was elected Vice President of the concern; Billy O'Brien, President. Others among the original investors were, H. C. Putnam and Son, Judge Marsh, George Howe, Al Lammers and George Lammers (uncle and father respectively of Mr. Roy Lammers, now an official of the [Mc?] Goldrick Lumber Company, Spokane).

To arrive at anything approximating an accurate appraisal of a given tract of standing timber, it is first necessary to “cruise” it. The term cruise means to travel through the timber lands progressively surveying it into blocks and estimating the amount of standing timber, logging conditions etc., until the entire tracts is covered.

Due to the common practice of bribing the cruisers, it is often difficult to obtain a man whose ability and integrity are both above question. So, to eliminate any doubt on this score, the stockholders of the new company insisted that Mr. F. C. Leonard make a personal cruise of the entire 242 thousand acres. Consequently, Mr. Leonard spent the winters of 1904-05, 1905-6, and 1906-7, cruising the tract. During the two latter winters Mr. W. G. Leonard assisted his father. This work was done only in winter as they could not stand the summer climate of that region.

Mr. Leonard states that many “squatters” were found to be living on the company lands. Squatters, as the name implies, were so designated from the fact that they were living on and in many cases farming land without authority of any sort to do so. Most of these squatters were English colonists who had settled in Georgia very early in the country's history but had retained most of their typically English characteristics of manner, habits, and speech. To escape civil war service they had fled to the Florida backwoods. But, even here, generations later, they were still typically English in many ways.

One squatter in particular is recalled by Mr. Leonard - Tom Gornton was his name. The Leonards came upon him living in a little clearing far back in the woods. Here Gornton had

a small, roughly constructed unchinked log cabin, a lean-to shed which sheltered an old horse, some razor-back hogs, a few chickens, three pecan trees, and a patch of corn.

Gornton was at first quite stand-offish but, when assured that they did not intend to molest him became quite friendly. When questioned as to why he remained in such an isolated spot, he explained that he was making a good living from the three pecan trees. The trees in question were apparently either wild or had sprung from seed.dropped by an earlier passer-by. At any rate they were there when Gornton first-arrived. They had never been pruned or given any attention whatsoever and, as a result, had grown to the sits of large elms. 6 But, nevertheless, they supplied Gornton with a yearly income of $90.00, which was the figure the commission man paid for the nuts while still on the tree. The commission man supplied the nut-pickers, so Gornton did not raise a finger in return for the income, and the $90.00 raised his status to that of a “man of means”, an his cash outlay was insignificant. Gornton wore only a hickory shirt, black cotton jeans and a straw hat. His wife wore the cheapest of cotton garments, and those of the children who wore anything at all were dressed accordingly.

Their diet consisted of such pork as the razor-back hogs produced; whatever vegetation that could be used for greens, a sort of hominy they called “grits”, and bread made of corn meal.

The timber an the Putnam tract was heavy but scattered in bunches with open palmettograss covered lands between stands to give a park-like appearance. The geology of the country was very unusual. Mr. Leonard thinks that it was coral formation. The soil was a sort of white dust and the whole seemed to be over an underground river or sea. While working through these woods it was necessary to watch closely for sinkwholes. These were two to four feet in diameter, going straight down, and very similar to hand-dug wells. The water table in these holes was usually thirty to forty feet below the ground level. One hole encountered, however, contained water which seemed to rise and fall like

a tide; in high tide it came almost to the ground level. Fish could be seen from time to time in these holes.

The Leonard cruise of the 242 thousand acres reported, 1,250 million feet of pine; 350 feet of cypress and 150 million feet of hardwood, mostly gum of the type used for barrel heads. There was also a scattering of pencil cedar which was so valuable that later guards had to be employed to protect it against poachers. Mr. Leonard states that a piece the size that could be carried on a man's shoulder would net the poacher as much as a day's wages at other work.

The pencil cedar was sold to the Dixon pencil people for $100,000.00. Mr. Leonard estimates that this firm recovered a million dollars worth of cedar wood.

The Putnam Lumber company is still cutting and manufacturing the timber on this tract. At the present rate of cutting it will take some years yet to completely liquidate it.

As a side-light on the Florida prison system, Mr. Leonard states that prisoners who were not employed by the authorities themselves were leased to private concerns.

The Putnam Lumber company some three or four years prior to logging a given area, would sell the turpentine concession. The turpentine could be extracted for about this long without jeopardizing the quality of the wood.

It was a practice of the turpentine men to employ leased penal labor in the woods. The prisoners so employed were usually grossly mistreated, underfed and overworked. If they showed indications of shirking their work, they would be beaten. In the course of one of these beatings, a youthful prisoner lost his life and relatives pushed the matter with the final result that, as the turpentine man were not financially responsible, it cost the Putnam Lumber company some $20,000.00.

The case of John Dietz is in many ways similar, from the standpoint of public reaction, to the celebrated Tom Mooney case. The Dietz controversy had its inception in 1901 and was front-page for two years thereafter.

Mr. F. C. Leonard, as a manager for the Weyerhaueser Lumber interests, had hired and stationed a man named Billy Trombly, at a Weyerhaueser dam and camp an the Chippewa river. When the drive was on and logs were being sluiced through the dam, Trambly received drive wages of $2.50 per day. At other times Trambly's duties were merely those of a watchman and his pay was by the month at the rate of $30.00.

Trambly was supposed to stay right an the job at all times but, as his family lived in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, Mr. Leonard overlooked Trambly's occasional visits to town.

Just prior to one of these periodical visits, John Dietz asked Trambly for permission to camp in the warehouse while deer hunting in the vicinity. Trambly readily granted the favor and shortly afterwards left for Rice Lake.

Upon Trambly's return in several days, Dietz, who stood about six feet and weighed in the neighborhood of two hundred pounds, informed Trambly that he might as well go back to town as he, Dietz, was taking his job. A fight ensued in which Trambly, who was only of average size, was severely beaten.

About this time, Mr. Leonard had resigned as Weyerhaueser's manager and was showing his successor, Jack Ryan, over the “works”. When they arrived at the dam camp Trambly put the matter up to Mr. Leonard, who referred it to Mr. Ryan. Mr. Ryan after hearing both sides, said that as Dietz had proven himself the best man in the combat he could retain the job.

Mr. Leonard had always instructed the timekeeper to pay Trambly each month while on the monthly scale and to pay him whatever he had coming at the “drive” rate of pay just

as soon as the drive was over. Mr. Ryan neglected to issue similar instructions to the timekeeper regarding Dietz.

Dietz worked for over a year and had not asked for a cent. Then he quit and put in a claim for straight time at the rate of $2.50 per day which, of course, amounted to much more than the amount he was entitled to. However, after much bickering, the company paid his claim to end the matter.

Dietz's success in holding up the great Weyerhaueser company went to his head and he turned out and out radical.

On the Thornagle river, the Daniel Shaw Lumber Co. had constructed the Cameron dam under a state charter. It so happened that one corner of this dam extended 8 to a government 40 acre block. When the Shaw Lumber Co. ceased operating, they sold the chartered dam and other improvements to the Weyerhaueser Co.

Dietz, in the meantime, had quietly had his wife file for homestead on the 40 acres at the dam site, and had put up same log buildings and did enough work to secure the title.

The Weyerhaueser Co. was bringing a drive down Thornapple Creek. When they got to their dam they were met by Dietz who demanded 20¢ per thousand feet to allow the logs through and backed his demand with a gun.

The Weyerhaueser Co. held up their logs until they received a court order permitting them to use their own dam. Sheriff Fred Clark of Sawyer county, who was friendly with Dietz, went out to serve the court order. To avoid any trouble he went unarmed. He and Dietz sat on a log and discussed the matter. Dietz informed Clark that, friend or not, if he attempted to enforce the court order he would kill him.

By this time public interest had become aroused. Newspaper men, anxious for copy, egged Dietz on in his stand, dubbing him in their columns, “The Hero of Cameron Dam”.

Frederick Weyerhaueser told Mr. Leonard that for $50.00 he could have Dietz killed, but, as that wasn't his way he would leave it to the Courts to deal with him.

Six men in National Guard uniforms went to Dietz's camp to arrest him. Dietz opened fire and in the ensuing gun battle several of the men were wounded before they retreated.

A private detective, Billy Elliott, had an idea that he could walk right into Dietz's camp, tap him on the shoulder any say “come with me”. He got to the camp all right but did no shoulder tapping. Close shooting by Dietz chased him into an old cook-house where he remained until he could beat a retreat under cover of darkness.

By this time the Dietz case was on front pages of newspapers throughout the nation. Public sympathy, accelerated by distorted newspaper accounts, was with Dietz for daring to make a one-man stand against a big corporation.

After much argument and general fuss and ado, the State Government of Wisconsin declared the whole thing a public disgrace and insisted that it be cleared up. Finally, a determined move to get Dietz, got under-way. Two hundred woodsmen were deputized and given a bench warrant for his arrest. When they had his camp surrounded a priest, who was friendly with Dietz, went in to persuade him to surrender. Dietz let him in his cabin. The priest was amazed at the defense preparations. The floor had been dug down two feet below the ground level and loop-holes had been out at strategic points. Many types of fire-arms with a prodigous supply of ammunition was distributed about the loop-holes. The priest failed to persuade Dietz to surrender but he was allowed to move Mrs. Dietz to safety. Dietz's two grown sons and his daughter elected to stay with their father and fight it out. When the priest, with Mrs. Dietz, had reached a point of safety, the deputized force laid a terrific barrage of rifle-fire on the cabin. Their fire was vigorously returned for a time until suddenly Dietz made a dash to his barn and barricaded himself in the loft. The barn was immediately surrounded but in the maneuver a woodsman named Harp (Oscar Harp), was killed. Dietz wounded, and realizing that fight was hopeless,

surrendered, was tried and sentenced to life imprisoment. 9 His two sons and his daughter went on a vaudeville tour.

Dietz served twelve years of the life sentence. Upon his release, he too, went into vaudeville, but died in a short time.

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